

BUYING HELP

Worried about satnav mapping errors

Q While looking through an old copy of *Computer Shopper*, I read an article comparing satellite navigation units such as TomTom. I used to install the larger, more expensive satnav kits made by companies such as Siemens, so I know quite a bit about using them. When I read the article, I noticed one area that you did not cover, which is very important.

A navigation system is only as good as its maps and, to my mind, if there is no way of telling the manufacturers about map faults then I think the equipment should be avoided at all costs. Several times I've been told to go "straight ahead at the next motorway junction" when going north to south, but when going in the other direction, although I can see the junction on the map, the unit doesn't mention it. Has anyone ever tried to send an email to TomTom from its website?

I know that map changes can take more than a year, but there should still be a way of pointing out problems for the benefit of everyone concerned. As far as I'm concerned, manufacturers who do not offer this service should be regarded with suspicion.

Jim Lewis, via email

A Satnav manufacturers update their maps every year or so to account for changes in the road layout and to correct mapping mistakes. Updates are fairly expensive, however, and there's no guarantee that a particular niggle that's been bothering you on the journey home will have been fixed.

Fortunately, TomTom has taken steps to correct this problem with its MapShare service. This was originally available only on the top-of-the-range TomTom Go 720, but has since been extended across the whole TomTom range.

MapShare lets you correct any map errors on the unit itself using the touch screen, so you can correct place names, reverse the direction of one-way streets and add missing roads and place names. If you wish, you can keep the changes to yourself, but if you connect the TomTom to your PC, you can upload your changes to TomTom's servers for everyone to view, as well as download verified updates made by other users. You have to buy new maps every year to take advantage of the service, but you will be sure that your maps are as up to date as they can be.

The cheapest TomTom is TomTom's One 3rd Edition, at £150 including VAT from www.tomtom.com. It got a four-star rating in our satnav Labs in *Shopper 238*.



▲ TomTom's One lets you correct mapping errors while on the move with the help of MapShare

INTRODUCTION

If you don't know what type of product you need, or you're wondering whether or not a particular product will work with your computer, contact *Buying Help*.

If you want to buy a new desktop or notebook computer, please provide details of how much you want to spend and the type of tasks you want your new PC to perform.

If you're looking to buy an upgrade for your computer, you need to include as much information about your current system as possible. Knowing your computer make and model, processor, amount of memory and motherboard model can help us to provide a more accurate advice.

Chris Finnermore

Our Labs Manager can recommend the best product for your specific requirements.



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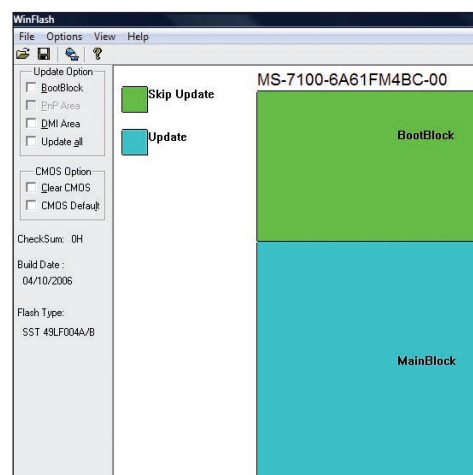
Unrecognised processor

Q I have an Acer E380 computer with a Socket AM2 EM61SM motherboard, which currently has an AMD X2 4200+ processor. I wanted to upgrade the processor to a faster AMD X2 6000+. However, when I tried to find out if this processor would work with my PC, Acer wouldn't tell me, and there was no information on the website. I took the plunge anyway, and fitted the 6000+ and the PC boots into Windows.

The problem is that while CPU-Z recognises the processor, the Windows Vista Experience Index lists it as Unknown. Will this affect the processor's performance? I've heard that I may need to update my BIOS, but how would I go about doing this?

Ron Jones, via email

A It sounds like your motherboard is not recognising the new processor properly. While this means your PC will boot, your processor's performance may be affected. Fortunately, you can usually fix this on AMD motherboards with a BIOS update. An update is available on Acer's FTP site at [ftp://ftp.work.acer-euro.com/desktop/aspire_e380/bios](http://ftp.work.acer-euro.com/desktop/aspire_e380/bios), to which you can navigate using your web browser.



▲ If your new processor is not recognised, you may have to update your BIOS

Download the WINFLASH.zip file and unzip it to your hard disk. Go into the WINFLASH folder and run WinFlash.exe. Follow the instructions to update your BIOS to the latest version, which should fix the problem.

Long-range wireless wanted

Q I'm looking to buy a new wireless router for my house. To get to the computer at the back of the house the signal has to pass through a couple of brick walls and a 15cm thick steel wall.

I would like it to have 802.11n technology, as this seems to be very fast and to have longer range than older 802.11g wireless. I'm also thinking of getting the 24Mbit/s Be Broadband service, but I don't know whether it is cable or ADSL broadband, so I am unsure of what type of router to get. I'd also like to know if the router will keep its extended 802.11n range when connected to a PC with 802.11g wireless, as the computer at the back of the house uses 802.11g.

James McAvery, via email

A The 802.11n wireless standard has yet to be ratified, so all the n-branded routers currently available use various interpretations of the draft 802.11n standard. This means that they work properly only with their own matching Draft-N equipment, and may work slowly, or not at all, with other manufacturers' equipment. For this reason, in order to get the most out of your Draft-N router you have to buy matching CardBus or USB adaptors for a laptop, or USB or PCI adaptors for a PC as well as your router, which can significantly increase the cost.

Fortunately, Draft-N routers are backwards-compatible with 802.11g wireless adaptors, such as those found in most modern

laptops and your PC. Draft-N routers also tend to be faster than normal G routers when connected to G equipment, and they also have significantly longer range.

As Be Broadband is an ADSL service, you're best off buying a router with a built-in ADSL modem. Our current favourite is Linksys's WAG325N, which won a Best Buy award in *Labs*, *Shopper* 241 and is currently £80 including VAT from www.ebuyer.com. When paired with an 802.11g notebook, this router has an excellent throughput of 15.16Mbit/s at a range of 25m. This distance is comparable to the setup in your home.

While this speed is slower than Be Broadband's theoretical maximum speed, you shouldn't notice any real difference when downloading files or surfing the web. Bear in mind that Be Broadband already supplies a free 802.11g wireless router with its service, so you should test whether this has a fast-enough wireless connection for your needs before replace it with a new router.



► Linksys's WAG325N has excellent wireless range, even when used with standard 802.11g equipment

Kaspersky price query

Q On page 56 of *Shopper* 241, you quote the price of Kaspersky Internet Security 7.0 as £18 including VAT (one year, one PC). The Kaspersky website quotes this as £36.12 without VAT. It offers a 30 per cent discount until 4th February, making the price £29.70 including VAT. Is your figure wrong, or is there some other explanation?

Derrick Newson, via email

A Kaspersky Internet Security 7.0 won a Best Buy award in *What's New*, *Shopper* 241 thanks to its effective protection from all types of malware, such as viruses and spyware. It seems we did make a mistake in issue 241 with the price, but you can still buy the software for £25 including VAT from www.kaspersky.com. Be aware that many online retailers offer the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) version for less than this, but this version is licensed for manufacturers only, not for home or office users.



▲ Kaspersky Internet Security will keep your PC safe and is great value at just £25 including VAT

DirectX 10 AGP graphics card upgrade

Q I currently have a Sapphire X1600 Pro 256MB AGP graphics card, but I've been looking to upgrade it for a while. I realise that having an AGP motherboard is a disadvantage when choosing a graphics card, but replacing my motherboard with a PCI Express version is unfortunately not an option for me. I read the *Shopper* review of the Radeon X1950 AGP and thought that it was exactly what I needed, but after doing some research I found that Sapphire had also released a DirectX 10 series for AGP.

I have a budget of about £100, and have heard a lot of good things about DirectX 10 from friends and reviews, so I looked around for some AGP DirectX 10 cards. The highest-specification card I could find was the Radeon HD 2600 at about £55. This seems to have a similar specification to the X1950, aside from having a 128-bit instead of 256-bit memory bus and slower DDR2 rather than DDR3 memory. I would like to have DirectX 10 so I am prepared for future games, but I'm

worried that if I choose the HD 2600 over the X1950 Pro, the difference in the specifications will adversely affect the games' performance. If this is the case, are there any higher-specification DirectX 10 graphics cards on the market for AGP motherboards?

Alex Loveday, via email

A The AGP card slot is now very old, but fortunately Sapphire hasn't forgotten AGP motherboard owners. The AGP version of the X1950 Pro is essentially a PCI Express card with a PCI Express-to-AGP bridge. It is slightly slower than the PCI Express version, but still manages a playable 33.2fps in our Call of Duty 2 test so it can handle modern games. It's also good value, at £106 including VAT from www.scan.co.uk.

As you rightly point out, the X1950 Pro isn't DirectX 10-compatible, so it cannot use all the latest graphical effects available in new games if you're running Windows Vista. The HD 2600 Pro supports DirectX 10, but is far slower than the X1950 Pro and will struggle with most DirectX



▲ Sapphire's good-value and fast HD 3850 is now available for AGP motherboards

10 games. Luckily, you don't have to compromise. Sapphire recently launched an AGP version of ATI's new HD 3850 graphics card, which is faster than the X1950 Pro and DirectX10-compatible. It costs £121 including VAT from www.kikatek.com. **CS**